



friend to another man's son when I returned to the capital; an affiliation with a political NGO; and, to echo Traube here, multiple offers of marriage (often extended by older relatives regarding women I had never met). Each of these, too, do not come from an abstracted 'community', but from individuals seeking their own connection and understanding with and of the ethnographer. But what are the histories and implications of such bonds? Shepherd addresses these questions and more by drawing not only upon the situations he presents, but also with a deep knowledge of debates within anthropological theory and an eye towards what a historical perspective can provide.

Shepherd's book, then, has value on multiple levels, and I enthusiastically recommend it to anyone interested in histories of ethnography, animism, or reflexive or ontological anthropology. It brings history into relevance for anthropology, and anthropology into relevance for historical research. Additionally, it is eminently readable, and each chapter can productively be used on its own in an undergraduate setting (to do so, of course, would be to miss his structuring insights, which would be a shame). Overall, the book is a sensitive and lively reading of history against the grain, of understanding the multiple ways that people seek to understand the role of the other, the unknown, the possible, and the unseen.

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Vietnam

Silence and sacrifice: Family stories of care and the limits of love in Vietnam

By MERAV SHOHE

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This book is a fascinating ethnographic assessment of the continuity of families in Vietnam historically, as families have coped with and emerged from tumultuous periods over the course of the twentieth century. Shohet investigates processes that have bound families together during anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles against French colonialism; war between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north and the Republic of Vietnam in the south and their American allies; and significant political, economic, and social shifts that occurred as a result of socioeconomic reforms, beginning in the mid-1980s, with the implementation of *đổi mới* (Renovation) policies. Indeed, Shohet opens with the central theme of the book: 'How do families hold together when turbulent forces threaten to tear them apart?' (p. 9). In this sense, while the book provides an engaging and deeply descriptive ethnographic portrayal of Vietnamese family life, Shohet's analysis informs us about family continuity in times of significant struggle and change even beyond Vietnamese society. The author interrogates the complex ways people negotiate everyday interactions, ethical ideals, and intergenerational relationships to tie family

members together. The book argues that in Vietnam practices of sacrifice and love (*tình cảm*) keep families bound together. Yet cohesion achieved by families is precarious, as 'it involves suffering and hard work to sustain and sometimes runs up against the limits of love' (p. 10).

The book provides an examination of intimate relations among family members. Shohet conducted a family-centred ethnography with the goal of understanding ways ethical lives and kinship are enacted predominantly in the domestic sphere, as she moves away from anthropological studies of kinship as primarily conceptualised rather than lived. This ethnography draws on Shohet's anthropological fieldwork in the city of Đà Nẵng and the province of Quảng Nam. She focuses especially on the experiences of five extended families, with her book being based on her overall research with 80 households in these locations. The everyday sacrifices of men and women are assessed through analysis of enthralling and often moving ethnographic stories. Both are asked to sacrifice for their nation, family, and others, as these sacrifices and forms of suffering merge in people's everyday lives during extraordinary times.

The book makes an important contribution to anthropological and other humanistic studies of sacrifice with its movement away from a predominant focus on sacrifice as having a sacred quality, or on sacrifice as a nationalist act, an idea prominent in scholarship on postwar Vietnam. The book also provides an alternative to an anthropological focus on sacrifice as involving violence. While analysis of sacrifice involving violence and death in relation to state ideologies of nationalism has been significant in scholarship on Vietnam, this book builds on this scholarship and diverts from it by examining sacrifice in Vietnam as a family-based everyday practice, experience, and moral orientation. Shohet skilfully explains the subtle and multiple meanings of sacrifice and love enacted among family members in diverse contexts, including: during periods of war as entangled individual, familial, and national sacrifices; in asymmetrical reciprocal relationships among family members, as well as among friends, that constitute quotidian practice; as key components of the moral socialisation of children; in gendered relations of romantic and family love and moral personhood; in the enactment of care, such as involving waiting on and dwelling with loved ones experiencing illness and loss; and in marriage and experiences of motherhood. Shohet also points to the prominence of silence as an element of sacrifice in everyday interactions. Sacrifice in families involves suffering in silence for the benefit of one's family members. Importantly, the author asserts that the interrelated principles of sacrifice, asymmetrical reciprocity, and love aid in providing people a sense of family continuity and serve as 'a means of smoothing over past, present, and possible future conflicts' (p. 122). Significant to this analysis, as well, are the complexities and ambivalences of family members' everyday lives.

An impressive strength of this book is the way the author adroitly captures the nuances of moral practice, including sacrifice, in Vietnamese society. For instance, while ethics are shown to guide people's everyday actions and inform relationships, Shohet employs the concept of 'sideshadowing logics' to point to ways Vietnamese people may suspend judgement and privilege ambiguity given the broader history and context of particular actions. Additionally, a provocative angle this book takes

up is analysing the gendered elements of sacrifice. Shohet demonstrates ways Vietnamese women are expected to sacrifice to a greater extent than are men, yet how they encounter contradictory ideologies of womanhood as well. While different regimes in Vietnam have diverged politically and socially, the author argues that Vietnam's Confucian, colonial, socialist and market regimes have shared a dominant discourse of ideal women, as self-sacrificing, virtuous, and the moral cornerstone of the Vietnamese nation. Women's sacrifices are not only expected by the government and in relation to Confucian ideals of virtue and hierarchy, they are also reinforced by other women, such as through women's gossip about moral failures in regard to family unity and harmony. Always pointing to the complexity and ambiguity of emergent ideals of ethics and affect in Vietnamese social life, including those associated with gender, Shohet points to ways some women pursue modern ideologies of gender equality and middle-class status while also remaining committed to forms of love that reinforce hierarchical gender, intergenerational, and class relations.

This book is impressive on many levels, including its theoretical sophistication, as well as its eloquent writing. It makes a significant contribution to our understanding of continuity in change, particularly among families. This book is important for scholars and students of Vietnam and Asia more broadly, and also for anthropologists and other scholars concerned with ethics, kinship and family, gender, affect, and care.

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